

Administration of Barack Obama, 2015

Remarks During a Meeting With Leaders of the Caribbean Community and Common Market in Mona, Jamaica

April 9, 2015

Well, thank you very much. Let me begin, once again, by thanking Prime Minister Portia Simpson-Miller for—and the people of Jamaica for their wonderful hospitality, as well as the University. I want to thank the Chair of CARICOM, Prime Minister Christie of the Bahamas, and all the leaders and their teams that are here today.

As has already been mentioned, the bonds between us are extraordinarily strong. The Caribbean is a place of extraordinary beauty, people of enormous spirit, unique talents, a wonderful culture. We are bound by friendship and shared values and by family. And we have a great stake in each other's success.

We last met as a group at the Summit of the Americas in Cartagena. We work together every Summit of the Americas, as we will again in Panama. And I wanted to meet today so that we could take some time to focus on the unique opportunities and challenges that this region faces.

We're going to have a chance to talk about the issues that have already been mentioned: making sure that we deepen our cooperation in economic growth and how we can further integrate the region; making sure that our governments are open and transparent, and upholding human rights for all citizens; combating transnational crime through our Caribbean Basin Security Initiative. And a particular focus today is going to be one of the greatest barriers to development in the Caribbean, and that is expensive, often unreliable, and carbon-intensive energy.

This region has some of the highest energy costs in the world. Caribbean countries are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, and we have to act now. This is an example of—large countries and small countries have to work together, because without collective action, we're not going to be able to address these challenges.

The Vice President hosted a summit on this in January. Our Caribbean Energy Security Initiative aims to help move the region toward cleaner more affordable energy. Today we're announcing new partnerships, including a new fund to mobilize private investment in clean energy projects in the Caribbean and in Central America. And I'm confident that given the commitment of the CARICOM countries and the U.S. commitment, that this is an issue in which we can make great strides over the short term and even greater strides over the long term.

Finally, let me mention the issue of youth. As you indicated, if there's one thing that I've been convinced of during the course of my 6½ years in office, it is that wherever we are able to harness the spirit and innovation and boldness of our youth and channel that in a positive direction, those countries succeed, and our futures will be bright. And that is true here in the Caribbean and throughout the Americas.

And so I'm very much looking forward to a town hall meeting I'll be hosting in which young leaders from all your countries will attend. But more importantly, we're going to be very interested in building some concrete programs that give them the kind of education and training that will ultimately help to benefit not only your countries, but will benefit the world.

And with that, let me suggest that we get to work. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:47 p.m. in the Regional Headquarters Building of the University of the West Indies, Mona—Western Jamaica Campus.

Categories: Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) leaders.

Locations: Kingston, Jamaica.

Names: Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Christie, Perry G.; Simpson-Miller, Portia L.

Subjects: Bahamas: Prime Minister; Caribbean nations : Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI); Caribbean nations : Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM); Caribbean nations : Economic growth and development; Caribbean nations : Energy, alternative and renewable sources and technologies; Caribbean nations : Relations with U.S.; Environment : Carbon emissions; Environment : Climate change; Foreign policy, U.S. : Civil and human rights, promotion efforts; Foreign Policy, U.S. : Open government and transparency, promotion efforts; Jamaica : President Obama's visit; Jamaica : Prime Minister; Law enforcement and crime : Transnational criminal organizations; Western Hemisphere : Summit of the Americas; White House Office : Vice President.

DCPD Number: DCPD201500248.